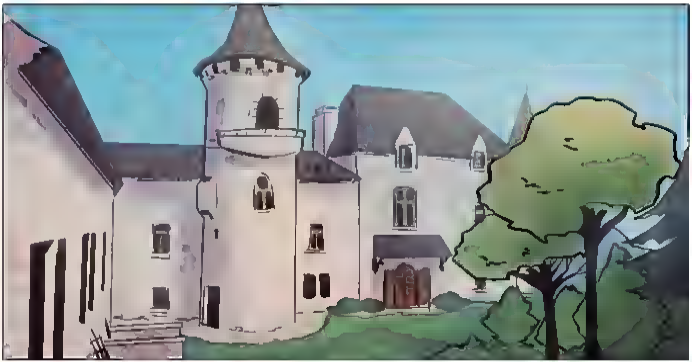
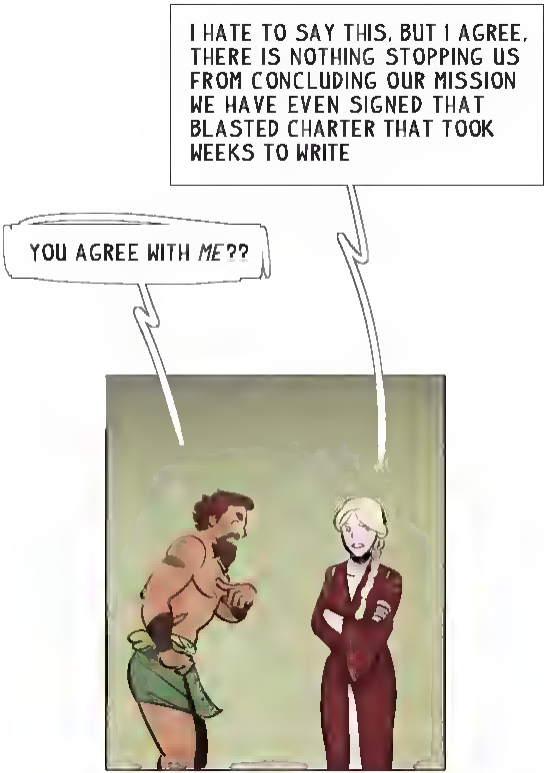


TIME IS GROWING SHORT. WE *MUST* COMPLETE THE RITUAL.

YES, WHAT ELSE IS THERE LEFT TO DO?! WE HAVE HIDDEN OUR FLIMSY PIECES OF PARCHMENT, WE HAVE LEFT INSTRUCTIONS IN STONE FOR OUR PEOPLE--


I HATE TO SAY THIS, BUT I AGREE, THERE IS NOTHING STOPPING US FROM CONCLUDING OUR MISSION WE HAVE EVEN SIGNED THAT BLASTED CHARTER THAT TOOK WEEKS TO WRITE
YOU AGREE WITH *ME*??

THERE IS ONE MORE THING TO PREPARE. I MUST CARVE MARKERS INTO THE SACRED GROUNDS OF THE RITUAL, LIKE THE PRIESTS ADVISED US TO

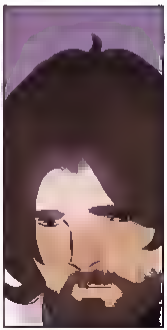
ELIAS, IT IS NOT IMPERATIVE TO DO SO. ALL THAT IS REQUIRED IS TO COMPLETE THE RITUAL BEFORE ANYTHING SHOULD BEFALL YOU

I THOUGHT YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MARKERS--

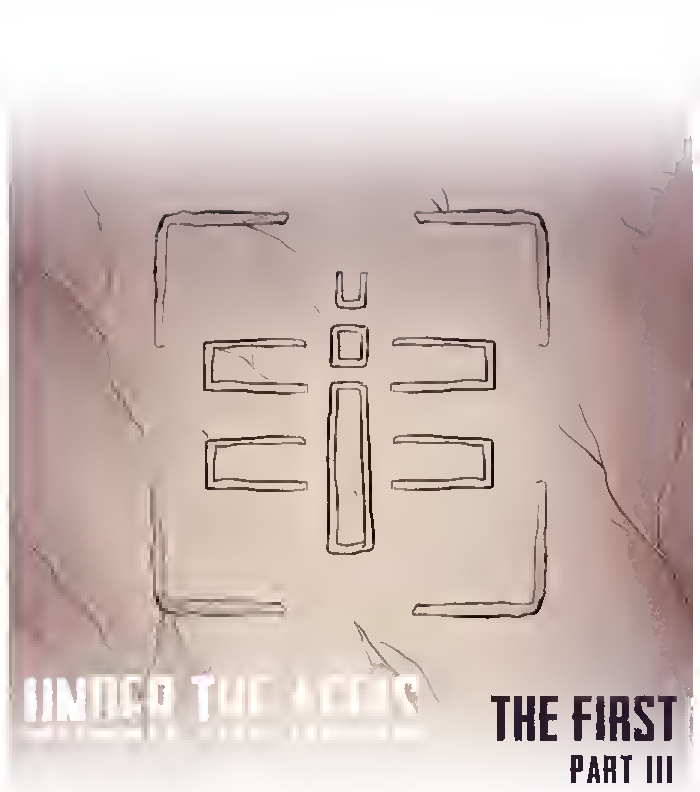
I DO...BUT I DO NOT WISH FOR YOU TO BE PUT IN UNNECESSARY DANGER--

MATTHEW...

EVERYTHING MUST
BE LEFT READY.

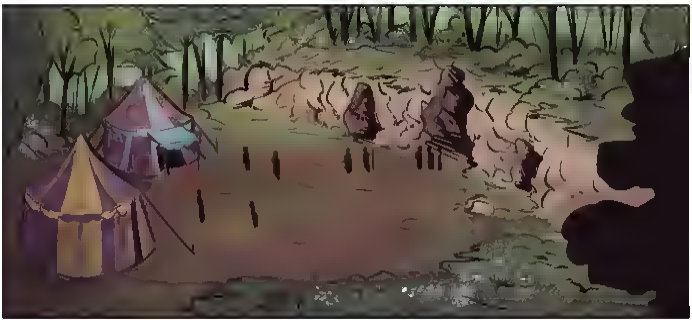


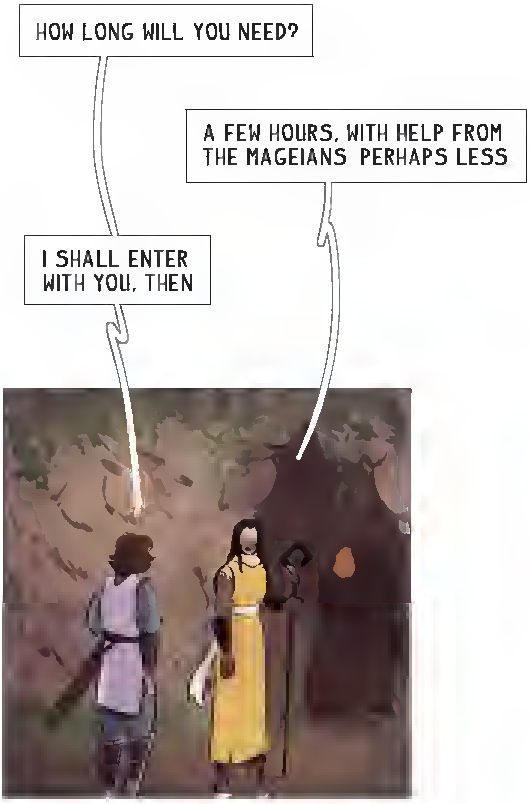
VERY WELL. WE SHALL ACCOMPANY YOU. ONCE YOU HAVE PLACED THE MARKERS, WE FINISH THE RITUAL.

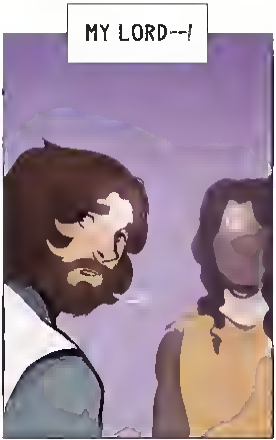



# THE FIRST

## PART III




HOW LONG WILL YOU NEED?
A FEW HOURS, WITH HELP FROM THE MAGEIANS PERHAPS LESS
I SHALL ENTER WITH YOU, THEN


MY LORD--!

WE HAVE RATHER URGENT QUESTIONS REGARDING THE MEMORIAL YOU WISHED TO HAVE BUILT ON THESE GROUNDS.

AH, OF COURSE. I FEAR YOU MUST WAIT UNTIL THIS AFTERNOON, THERE IS SOMETHING I HAVE TO--

PLEASE, ATTEND THEM.
I SHALL RETURN SOON.

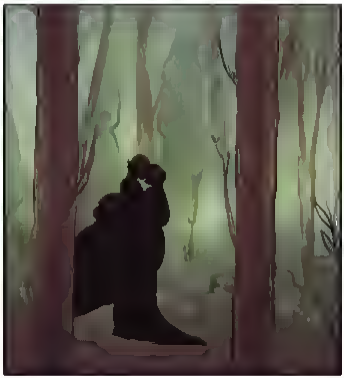
VERY WELL. LET US LOOK
OVER THE PLANS IN MY TENT.

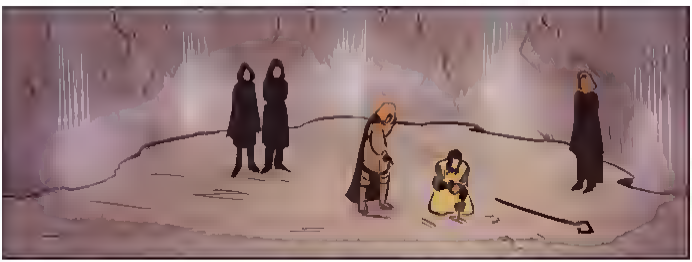
I WILL BE GLAD WHEN THE RITUAL IS COMPLETED. IT WILL MEAN AN END TO ELIAS' PARANOIA.

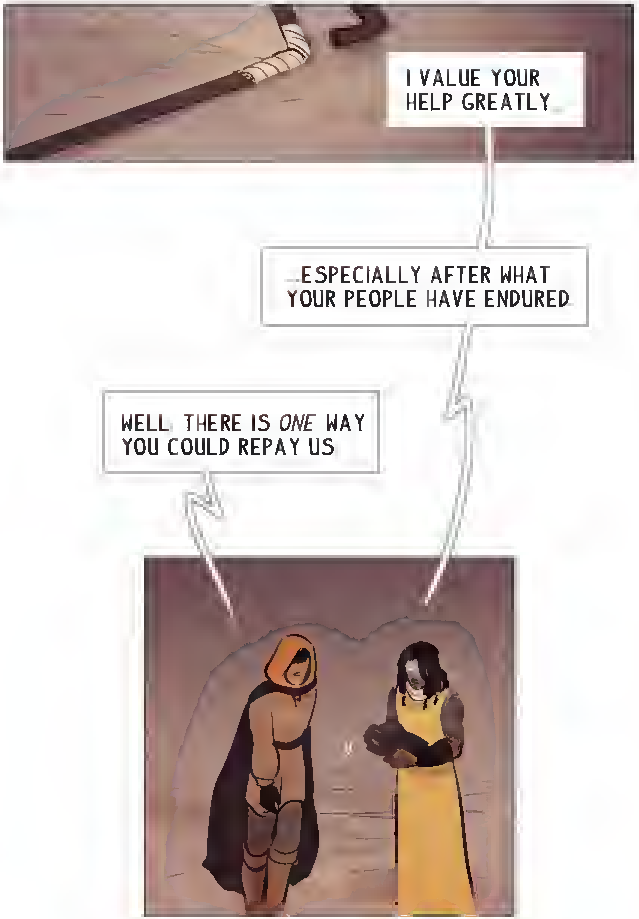
AGREED. I LOOK FORWARD TO PUTTING OUR PLANS IN MOTION. THE FIRST EIDEN AND THALASSAN ALLIANCE...

TRADE ROUTES, AGREEMENTS, THE JOINING OF CULTURES. WHY DID IT TAKE US SO LONG TO GET HERE?

WE JUST NEEDED A LITTLE PUSH.






I VALUE YOUR HELP GREATLY
...ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT YOUR PEOPLE HAVE ENDURED
WELL, THERE IS *ONE* WAY YOU COULD REPAY US

DO NOT COMPLETE THE RITUAL

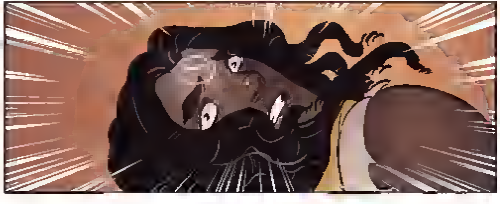
RETURN THE ENERGY TO US.
CONVINCE THE OTHERS OF THIS

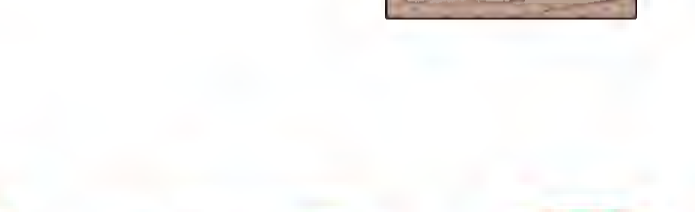
CONVINCE THE...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

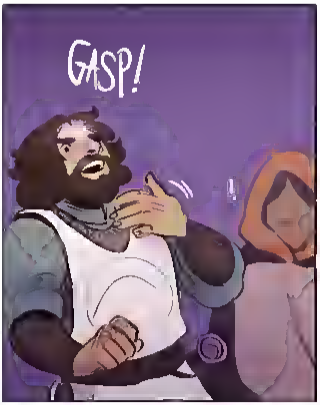
HOW DID YOU--?

THE MAGIC HAS FAILED!
GRAB HIM!




UNGH!

# SLASH


GASP!

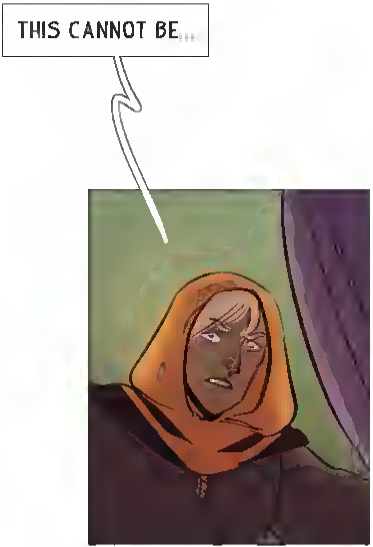
MY LORD--?
RASP
RASP

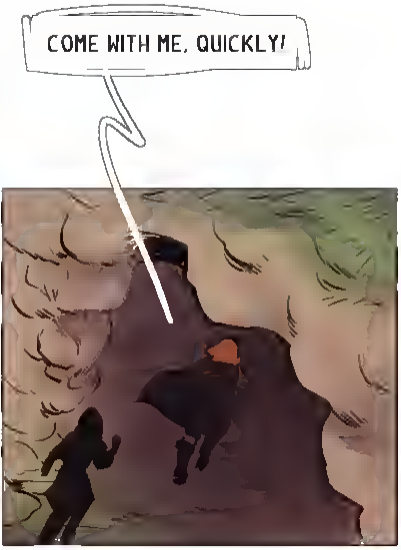
E...ELIAS...

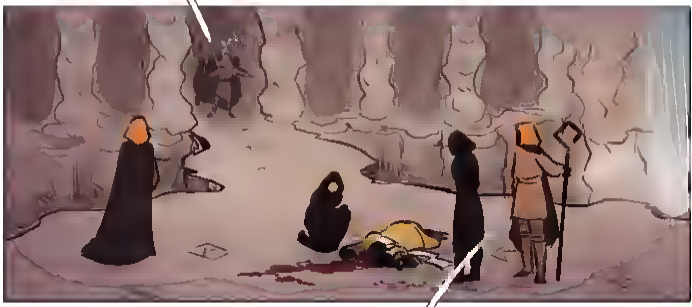
...GWEN?
SHH...I AM HERE.

I LOVE YOU

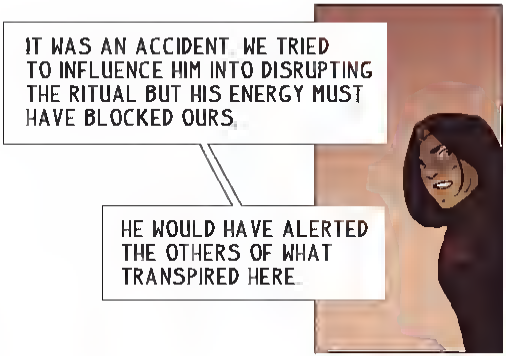
HE IS DEAD?
WE--WE WERE SIMPLY SPEAKING WITH HIM YOUR HOLINESS, AND HE FELL--!

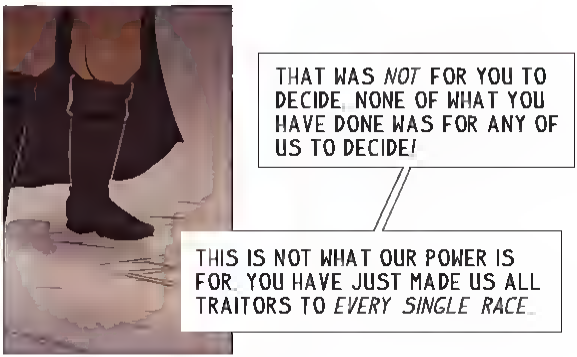

THIS CANNOT BE...


COME WITH ME, QUICKLY!


WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!?
WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE DONE FROM THE FIRST. THE ENERGY THEY HAVE IS RIGHTFULLY OURS. THEY HAVE TAKEN ENOUGH FROM US.

YOU HAVE KILLED THEM ALL! DID YOU NOT REALIZE HOW CLOSELY LINKED THEY WERE?
ALL OF--?


IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. WE TRIED TO INFLUENCE HIM INTO DISRUPTING THE RITUAL BUT HIS ENERGY MUST HAVE BLOCKED OURS.
HE WOULD HAVE ALERTED THE OTHERS OF WHAT TRANSPIRED HERE.

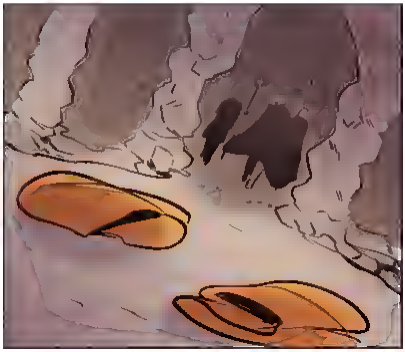

THAT WAS *NOT* FOR YOU TO DECIDE. NONE OF WHAT YOU HAVE DONE WAS FOR ANY OF US TO DECIDE!
THIS IS NOT WHAT OUR POWER IS FOR. YOU HAVE JUST MADE US ALL TRAITORS TO *EVERY SINGLE RACE*.

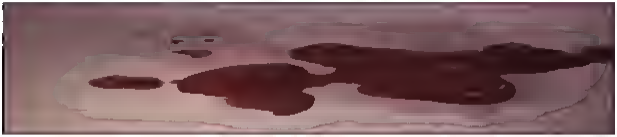
WE WERE TRAITORS THE MOMENT WE GAVE *THEM* OUR POWER

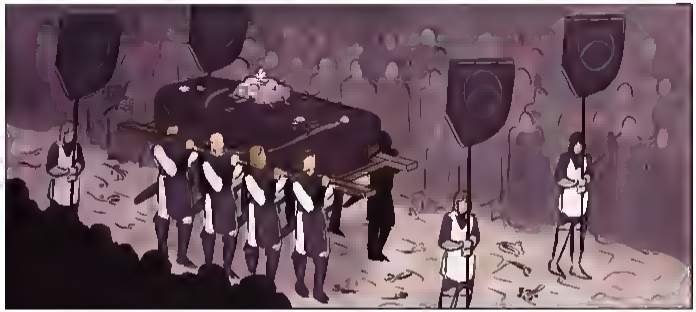
AT LEAST NOW WE STAND A CHANCE OF GETTING IT BACK

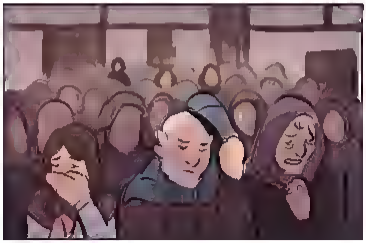
THIS HAS DISGRACED AND DESTROYED US—

THIS HAS *SAVED* US. AND IF YOU BELIEVE OTHERWISE, THAT MAKES *YOU* THE TRAITOR







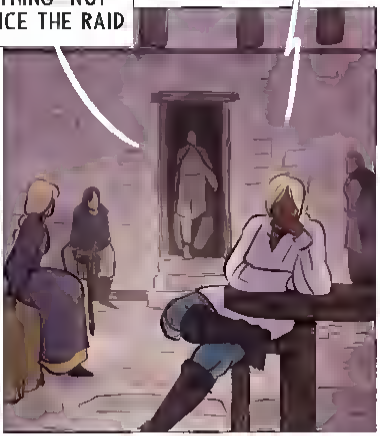


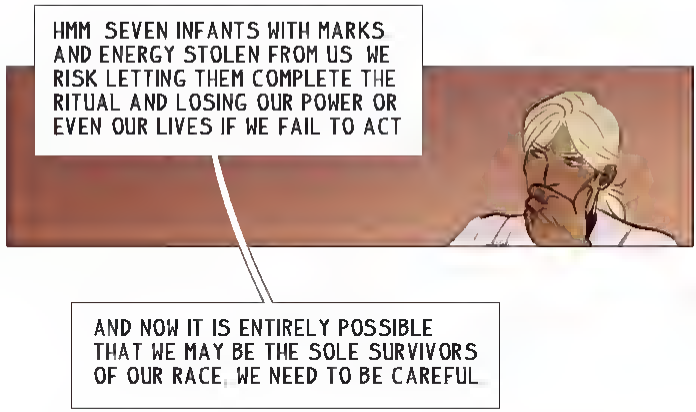
ONE YEAR LATER...

I HAVE PICKED UP NEWS FROM PASSING TRAVELLERS THE KINGDOMS OF EIDEN CRAIG AND THALASSA HAVE ALSO BORNE INFANTS BEARING SYMBOLS

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD OF OUR PEOPLE?

NOTHING NOT SINCE THE RAID




HMM SEVEN INFANTS WITH MARKS AND ENERGY STOLEN FROM US WE RISK LETTING THEM COMPLETE THE RITUAL AND LOSING OUR POWER OR EVEN OUR LIVES IF WE FAIL TO ACT
AND NOW IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT WE MAY BE THE SOLE SURVIVORS OF OUR RACE. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL

WE MUST THINK OF A PLAN